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Current vicuñas conservation and management. An approach.

Vicuñas (*Vicugna vicugna*) are wild South American Camelids that are being valued since prehispanic times mainly because of their fine fiber, one of the finest in the world. Since prehistoric times this species has been managed as a resource. Wildlife management is the science and art of deciding and acting on the structure, dynamics and relationships among populations of wild animals, their habitats and people in order to achieve certain objectives. This management can be passive (when the goal is to preserve or protect a natural entity at the mercy of natural processes) or active (involves changing the current situation through direct and planned intervention to increase, stabilize or reduce the population. For a successful vicuñas management approach it is crucial to incorporate an ethnozoology view as it necessarily includes the local indigenous knowledge and practices, and an andean regional cosmovision on the species and its use. Vicuñas management is a risky situation that involves uncertainty, has numerous actors and interest in dispute, and the decisions are urgent.

There is an International Convention for the Conservation and Management of the Vicuña signed by Argentina, Chile, Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador. In this convention the right of the local communities for the use of the species is theoretically guaranteed in its article 1. "The signatory governments agree that the conservation of the vicuña is an alternative economic production for the benefit of the andean people and are committed to its gradual use under strict state control". Currently, situations that put in risk the spirit of the Convention are emerging, because foreign textile firms have bought thousands of hectares in the Andes and they negotiate the usufruct of the vicuñas in their area. Some examples of current discussions on vicuñas management, and some concrete management examples will be presented: (a) wild or captive management, (b) ethnozoology approach to the new neo-chakus rituals, (c) risk of hybridization, (d) embryo transfer in relation to the need or not, of this technique.